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Extensive Use Of Lie Detectors By Federal Government Under Heavy Fire

By LOU HINER
Gazette's Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON—The pretty 17-year-old girl, who had just finished high school three weeks earlier, fidgeted nervously during the interview in a federal building.

She was being questioned by a minor government official for a \$75 a week job as a clerk-typist.

LIE DETECTOR was being used.

The questioning turned to the young girl's "sex life." Among other things, the low-ranking bureaucrat asked the teen-ager if she were a "homosexual."

The distraught girl released herself from the equipment and left the interview in tears. She went home emotionally upset and confided to her parents about the strange questioning for such an insignificant job.

ALARMED, THEY contacted their congressman, Cornelius E. Gallagher, New Jersey Democrat, and thus began one of the most unusual congressional hearings in history.

By the time a House government operations subcommittee finished its investigation, there was no question that use of lie detector tests were more widespread in the federal government than anyone would have guessed.

In just one year, the government conducted 23,122 lie detector tests that cost the taxpayers an estimated \$4.5 million.

IT WAS DISCLOSED that 19 separate agencies own 512 polygraphs costing \$425,000, and a total of 24 agencies had 656 "authorized polygraph operators" on their payrolls.

The statistics did not include those from the supersecret Central Intelligence Agency, which is known to make heavy use of such equipment.

By the time the hearings were over and dozens of witnesses told about use of lie detectors in the various government departments, the congressmen reacted with both skepticism and anger.

"I WAS SHOCKED at the lack of any substantiation whatsoever that the lie detectors did any good," remarked Rep. Henry Reuss, D-Wis., a member of the subcommittee.

The investigation basically was concerned with possible misuse of lie detector equipment, as in the case of the young New Jersey teen-ager, in the course of screening potential federal employees.

The primary reason given for conducting such tests is that they are necessary for national security.

THE CONGRESSMEN also heard how the Army, Navy and Air Force used hidden microphones and "see-through" mirrors in booths where prospective civilian employees already were being checked by lie detectors in their interviews.

Reuss described the practice as "indefensible," adding:

"The subject should be warned that 'big brother' may be looking at him from behind a two-way mirror and that there's a concealed microphone under the desk."

Fred E. Inbau, Northwestern University law professor, testified before the subcommittee that an estimated 80 per cent of the federal polygraph operators are not properly qualified.

REP. JOHN E. Moss, D-Calif., explored by the subcommittee. Inbau, the Northwestern professor, argued the practice violates no constitutional rights since the person being interviewed volunteers to submit to the lie detector check. Dr. H. B. Dearman, a Tennessee psychologist, advised the subcommittee that such tests violate the search and seizure sections of the Fourth Amendment and the self-incrimination section of the Fifth Amendment.

Controversy arose also as to the accuracy of such tests. The Chicago polygraph experts contended the margin of error was only about 1 per cent, but Rep. Reuss asserted he had figured indicating the error could run more than 80 per cent.

Some of the most damaging testimony against government use of such equipment came from officials of the Atomic Energy Commission. They noted that every one who worked on the atomic bomb or had anything to do with the project during World War II had been tested by the polygraph.

HOWEVER, THE AEC dropped use of the equipment in 1953 after a staff study showed lie detector or polygraph examinations are not of value so far as AEC personnel security measures are concerned.

The AEC report added:

"For example, it would be completely worthless in detecting any subversive or agent who believed what he was doing was right and did not have a real sense of guilt combined with some emotional instability. Moreover, innocent but sensitive persons will give false positive results."

THE QUESTION of constitutionality of polygraph use by government agencies also was

explored by the subcommittee. Inbau, the Northwestern professor, argued the practice violates no constitutional rights since the person being interviewed volunteers to submit to the lie detector check. Dr. H. B. Dearman, a Tennessee psychologist, advised the subcommittee that such tests violate the search and seizure sections of the Fourth Amendment and the self-incrimination section of the Fifth Amendment. HE ADDED that in his opinion the government polygraph was being "used mainly as a mental blackjack to obtain a confession."

The congressional session ended without any action on the use of lie detectors in the federal government. But the subject is far from forgotten and is likely to be more fully discussed and investigated in the new Congress next year.

Chairman Moss has expressed his belief on the indiscriminate use of lie detectors by Uncle Sam:

"I think it constitutes a very dangerous invasion of our rights as Americans—and as human beings."

Opposite Attracted?

CIA's Lie Tests Are Called Unintelligent

Wash. Daily News, 23 Nov 64

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TESTS
(CIA)

Has the Central Intelligence Agency's omnipresent lie detector turned on its master? A Stanford University intelligence expert said today that it has.

Dr. Stefan T. Possony, who served 18 years in U.S. intelligence agencies, said use of the detector in pre-employment clearance tests by the CIA and other intelligence agencies is tending to weed out the active, all-American, conscientious and virile types most urgently needed as spies.

PERVERTS, DRONES . . .

Conversely, he said, over-reliance on the detector actually helps open the way for drones and trained communist employment of homosexuals, agents.

That is just the opposite of the way the CIA likes to think its lie detectors work. The agency and some other intelligence forces use them routinely as a part of pre-employment testing, as well as in many other situations, and one point of emphasis is usually sex.

In a study prepared for a congressional sub-committee investigating use of lie detectors in the Government, Dr. Possony said the trouble is that the detectors primarily measure emotional reactions like fear.

UNEASY NORMALITY

He said most virile young men with normal sex drives, reared in the tradition that sex life is a private matter, respond uneasily to bureaucratic questioning about their sex experience.

This causes the lie detector to register doubt, and in security cases doubts tend to be resolved against the applicant.

"By contrast, the genuine homosexuals, who lack even the rudiments of guilt feelings about their sex life and actually may be very proud of it, probably will pass the lie detector with flying colors," Dr. Possony said.

Hum-drum applicants with little or no sex drive (and no initiative either) likewise can pass the lie test with no sweat, Dr. Possony said.

As for counterspies, he said Russian spy schools know all about CIA use of lie detectors in personnel screening and can be presumed to have no trouble at all training infiltrators to beat the machine.

He said, "There is some ground to believe . . . that communist agents still are operating in American intelligence organizations and perhaps that there are more of them than ever." (UPI)